

his part to pass them by ; but if he has a proper sense of the responsibility of his office, and values more the spiritual benefit of those to whom he is sent to minister than the gratification of his own taste, the wonder which he might excite among the ignorant, or even the reputation for superior wisdom which he might acquire with a superior class, he will eschew all those subjects which, while interesting to a few, have no interest or practical value to the masses.

The conscientious preacher will feel it to be his duty for to distinguish between those subjects which are likely to only minister to the pleasure of his hearers, and those which minister to their instruction and permanent profit. The design of the pulpit is not to furnish church-goers with an intellectual treat, or a pleasing artistic performance. The preacher should indeed seek to please, but not as an end, but as a means. It would evince a churlish disposition in him if it afforded him no pleasure to know that he had been the instrument of pleasure to others, and that his performance, though designed for the accomplishment of a higher purpose, had been acceptable and pleasing to those who heard him. But, on the other hand, if he has any just conception of the real end of his ministry, and of the weighty responsibility which attaches to his office and work, nothing will be more painful to him than to learn that he has been to his hearers merely as one who played upon an instrument or who had a very pleasant voice. The simple fact a subject would most likely be interesting and pleasing to his audience, though it ought not to be overlooked, would not be sufficient to justify its selection, unless it could be made the vehicle of conveying some important lesson, or the means of making an impression which would likely to be permanently beneficial upon the mind of the hearer.

Then, it is not every subject which is capable of being intelligently and popularly treated within the limits which custom has assigned to the modern sermon. Sermons at present are judged largely by the time which is occupied in their delivery ; their value being in reverse proportion to their length. Almost any defect in them will be tolerated if they only are short ; but prolixity is even more intolerable than dullness itself. The popular lecturer will generally be allowed all the time which he may deem necessary for the elaboration of his theme, whether it be literary or scientific ; the lawyer may adapt the length of his speech to the difficulty and importance of the cause which he is engaged to plead ; and the political orator, whether at the hustings or in the forum, may speak until he has done--until he has said all that he deems it desirable to say on the question which forms the subject of discussion ; but the minister in the pulpit, whatever may be the nature of his theme or the difficulties with which it is beset, is expected to dispatch it in just about so many minutes--the limit varying according to the popularity of the preacher and the patience of the congregation, from twenty-five to forty-five minutes. Beyond the limit, in no circumstances must he presume to pass if he values his own good name or the good will of his hearers. Now very little thought is sufficient to convince any person of considerable intelligence that there are a great many subjects which cannot be treated except in the most superficial